WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A computer implemented method for managing a retrieval of multimedia content over a computerized network, the network having a plurality of servers connectable to one or more clients, the method comprising:

5   (a) retrieving at a first client a server guide identifying a list of servers capable of delivering a selected item of multimedia content;

(b) the first client automatically determining whether a connection may be made to a first server identified in the server guide to achieve delivery of the selected content item;

(c) if the connection may be made, the first client establishing a connection with 10   the first server to retrieve the selected content item therefrom;

(d) if the connection is unable to be made, the first client automatically determining whether a connection may be made to a second server identified in the server guide to achieve delivery of the selected content item; and

the first client repeating steps (c) and (d) for the second server and any additional 15   server identified in the server guide until a connection may be made to a server by which the selected content item may be delivered.

2. The method of claim 1, comprising selecting the multimedia content item from a list of available items.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein retrieving the server guide comprises 20   retrieving the guide from a guide server, and comprising the guide server storing a plurality of server guides for the content item and selecting one of the stored server guides upon receipt of a request from the client.

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4. The method of claim 1, wherein the servers identified in the server guide include one or more routers connectable to a content server, the content server storing the selected content item.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the first server is a multicast router and the second server is a multicast-in unicast-out proxy configured to receive data from the multicast router and provide a unicast connection to the first client.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein a third server identified in the server guide is a multicast-in unicast-TCP-out proxy configured to receive requests for parts of the content item from clients, subscribe to the multicast router, and deliver to clients data packets representing requested parts of the content item.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein the steps of automatically determining whether a connection may be made are performed first for the multicast address, then for the multicast-in unicast-out proxy router, and then for the multicast-in unicast-TCP-out proxy.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the server guide lists the servers in a given sequence, and wherein the steps of automatically determining whether a connection may be made are performed according to the given sequence of servers listed in the server guide.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein the server guide identifies each server in the list through a server address and server type.

10. A computer implemented method for managing a retrieval of multimedia content from a content server over a computerized network, the network having a plurality of servers connectable to one or more clients, the method comprising:

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retrieving at a first client a server guide identifying a list of servers capable of

delivering a selected item of multimedia content from the content server, the list including a

multicast router and a multicast-in unicast-out proxy router;

the first client automatically determining whether a connection may be made to

5   the multicast router identified in the server guide to achieve delivery of the selected content item;

if the connection may be made to the multicast router, the first client establishing

a connection with the multicast router to retrieve the selected content item therefrom;

if the connection is unable to be made to the multicast router, the first client

automatically determining whether a connection may be made to the multicast-in unicast-out

10   proxy router identified in the server guide to achieve delivery of the selected content item; and

if the connection may be made to the multicast-in unicast-out proxy router, the

first client establishing a connection with the multicast-in unicast-out proxy router to retrieve the

selected content item therefrom.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein the list of servers further includes a

15   multicast-in unicast-TCP-out proxy, and comprising, if the connection is unable to be made to

the multicast-in unicast-out proxy router, the first client automatically determining whether a

connection may be made to the multicast-in unicast-TCP-out proxy identified in the server guide

to achieve delivery of the selected content item.

12. A computer readable medium storing program code for, when executed,

20   causing a computer to perform a method for managing a retrieval of multimedia content over a

computerized network, the network having a plurality of servers connectable to one or more

clients, the method comprising:

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(a) retrieving at a first client a server guide identifying a list of servers capable of delivering a selected item of multimedia content;

(b) the first client automatically determining whether a connection may be made to a first server identified in the server guide to achieve delivery of the selected content item;

5   (c) if the connection may be made, the first client establishing a connection with the first server to retrieve the selected content item therefrom;

(d) if the connection is unable to be made, the first client automatically determining whether a connection may be made to a second server identified in the server guide to achieve delivery of the selected content item; and

10   the first client repeating steps (c) and (d) for the second server and any additional server identified in the server guide until a connection may be made to a server by which the selected content item may be delivered.

13. A system for establishing a connection over a network to retrieve multimedia content, the system comprising:

15   a memory device storing a server guide identifying a list of servers capable of delivering a selected item of multimedia content, the list including servers differing in transmission techniques; and

a connection manager for automatically attempting to establish a connection to the servers contained in the list one at a time and, upon determining that a connection can not be

20   established for a given server, attempting to establish a connection to another server in the list until a connection is established or connections can not be established to all servers.

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14. The system of claim 13, wherein the list of servers includes at least one server configured to multicast the content item and at least one server configured to unicast the content item.

15. The system of claim 14, wherein the list of servers includes two or more of the following: a multicast router, a multicast-in unicast-out proxy router, and a multicast-in unicast-TCP-out proxy.